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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 0032
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001822

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SUBJECT: THAILAND: EAP A/S CAMPBELL'S MEETING WITH DPM
SUTHEP

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. During a July 21 meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban told EAP Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell and the Ambassador that the Abhisit Vejjajiva government was committed to resolving the political conflict via the rule of law and democracy. The government would not be able to come to an accommodation with fugitive ex-PM Thaksin if he continued to evade criminal punishment and persisted in pushing for the downfall of the government. Suthep said that he had met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen to encourage a broad compromise that addressed overlapping territorial claims beyond the vicinity of the Preah Vihear temple, but that no progress had been made. A/S Campbell stressed to Suthep the need for RTG attention to concerns regarding the screening process for repatriating Lao Hmong and highlighted the role Thailand could play in assisting with international efforts to bring North Korea back to the Six-Party Talks. End summary.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

12. (C) EAP Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell, the Ambassador, EAP Deputy Assistant Secretary Scot Marciel, and EAP Special Assistant Mark Tesone met July 21 with Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban at Government House. A/S Campbell expressed USG appreciation for the bilateral relationship, particularly the military alliance, and asked Suthep for his view of the political situation in the coming months. Suthep underlined the commitment of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's government to the rule of law and to moving forward with resolving the political conflict via democratic means. Suthep, emphasizing the destabilizing impact of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, stressed that it would likely take some time before the political situation improved. Thaksin had continued to claim that he was being treated unfairly even though he had been found guilty by the Courts, Suthep said.

14. (C) A/S Campbell asked Suthep if the Thai government had considered approaching Thaksin to discuss a way to promote political reconciliation. Suthep replied that if Thaksin stayed abroad, stirred up anti-government sentiments, and evaded his sentence to prison, there was nothing that the Thai government could do. The former Prime Minister had not abandoned his involvement in Thai politics, and the April 2009 protests in Pattaya and Bangkok had demonstrated that Thaksin was willing to advocate anti-government activities, Suthep said. The Deputy Prime Minister said that he had

tried to reach out to Thaksin to talk by phone or to go to meet him in the days following the formation of the Abhisit government in December 2008, but Thaksin had refused to consider the request. The Thai government would not enter into a compromise with Thaksin that would involve the return of the former PM's seized funds, as he had broken the law and must accept the Court's ruling. Suthep said he was concerned that Thaksin would take a more overt approach to undermining the Thai monarchy after the reds suffered setbacks in the aftermath of the April Pattaya and Bangkok disturbances.

CAMBODIAN BORDER DISPUTE

15. (C) Suthep told A/S Campbell that he had met Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen three times in recent months in an effort to encourage Cambodian cooperation on a wide range of territorial issues, including overlapping territorial claims in the Gulf of Thailand. A larger compromise that would lead to exploration of gas and oil reserves in the Gulf would greatly benefit both countries and likely lead to accelerated resolution of the Preah Vihear temple issue. Suthep said he believed that Hun Sen understood the larger benefits, but it appeared that something was holding back the Cambodian Prime Minister, possibly Vietnamese involvement. Suthep said that the Thai government was engaging China on the border issue, as Cambodia needed Chinese support.

HMONG

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16. (C) A/S Campbell highlighted strong USG support for the U.S.-Thai alliance, particularly among members of Congress. That said, A/S Campbell stressed to Suthep serious congressional and executive branch concern regarding Lao Hmong in Thai camps, some of whom likely fear repatriation. RTG assistance in providing a transparent screening process for the Hmong would go far in reinforcing goodwill in the U.S. Suthep told A/S Campbell that a possible solution could entail the Lao government taking discrete steps to care for Hmong who voluntarily returned while the Thai government took care of those who feared returning to Laos. Suthep said that the Thai Cabinet was expected to soon appoint Tawin Pleansri as the new Secretary-General of the National Security Council, and that Tawin would address the Hmong issue.

THE SOUTH

17. (C) Noting that the U.S. viewed southern Thailand as a domestic issue for the Thai government, A/S Campbell asked Suthep for his thoughts on the ongoing violence in the South. Suthep said that the Abhisit government was committed to an approach to the South that was different from that of Thaksin, which Suthep characterized as harsh. The RTG would follow King Bhumibol's advice to know and understand the southern people and to assist with development in the region. The government would implement a budget of 63 billion baht (approx \$1.9 billion) to provide for accelerated development in the South, and Suthep would manage the budget himself. Suthep believed that as progress continued, southerners would increasingly turn to the government. Already violent incidents were down by forty-three percent.

PRESSURING THE DPRK

18. (C) A/S Campbell highlighted USG concerns to Suthep regarding North Korea's threat to regional security. As such, the U.S. and partners would pressure Pyongyang to return to the Six-Party Talks. It would be important for Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia to support these efforts and to insure that North Korea was not able to proliferate weapons and nuclear materials.

19. (U) This cable was cleared with A/S Campbell.
JOHN